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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain if a relationship exists between supervising teachers' personal attributes and professional backgrounds and the attitudes of their student teachers toward their field experiences. The subjects were 123 elementary and secondary student teachers completing their student teaching experience. Data collection utilized an attitudinal rating scale and a personal background questionnaire. Analysis of the scale revealed four factors of the student teaching/supervising teacher experience that were further analyzed and compared: mentoring, structure, support, and responsibility. Findings revealed that there was a significant difference in attitude mean scores of student teachers with female supervisors compared to student teachers with male supervisors. The data revealed no significant differences in attitude mean scores of student teachers as related to the ages of their supervising teachers. The study also revealed that no significant difference existed between the attutude mean scores of student teachers when comparing their supervising teachers' educational attainment level. However, there was a significant difference when comparing grade level of instruction and the student teachers' perception in the area of mentoring. A Two-Way ANOVA was performed to capture the possible interactions between the sex of the supervising teacher and the grade level of instruction. The study recommended additional research to identify the interactional effects on attitudes between like sexes of the supervising teacher and the student teacher. (28 references) (LL)

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The Relationship Between Supervising Teachers' Personal Attributes and Professional Background and the Attitudes of Their Student Teachers

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Abstract

This study was designed to ascertain if a relationship exists between the supervising teachers' personal attributes and professional backgrounds and the attitudes of their student teachers toward their field experience. The subjects were 123 elementary and secondary student teachers completing their 1989 fall field experience. The design of the study included the use of a 29 item Likert-type scale developed by Funk and Musgrave (1973) and a personal background questionnaire.

A factor analysis of the scale revealed four factors of the student teaching/supervising teacher experience that were further analyzed and compared. These four factors were: (a) Mentoring, (b) Structure, (c) Support, and (d) Responsibility. A series of One-Way ANOVAs were used to address five research hypotheses stated in the null. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in attitude mean scores of student teachers with female supervisors compared to student teachers with male supervisors. The data revealed no significant differences in attitude mean scores of student teachers as related to the ages of their supervising teachers. The study also revealed that no significant difference existed between the attitude mean scores of student teachers when comparing their supervising teachers' educational attatinment level. However, there was a significant difference when comparing grade level of instruction and the student teachers' perception in the area of mentoring. A Two -Way ANOVA was performed to capture the possible interactions between the sex of the supervising teacher and the grade level of instruction. The study recommended additional research to identify the interactional effects on attitudes between like sexes of the supervising teacher and student teacher.

Introduction:

The student teaching field experience is regarded by many as the most important component of the teacher education curriculum (Funk, Hoffman, Keithley, & Long, 1982). Turney (1982) described the experience as, ". . . the single most important intervention in a teacher's professional preparation" (p. 42); where student teachers ". . . put it all together under the supervision and guidance of significant others" (Karmos & Jacko, 1977, p. 102). Conant (1963) describes student teaching as, ". . . the one indisputably essential element in professional education" (p. 142).

A major element in the success of this experience is the supervising teacher. As Yee (1968) stated, "There is consensus that the cooperating teacher is the most relevant variable operating in student teaching" (p. 327). According to Karmos, et al., (1977), ". . . it is generally agreed that the key to the value of the experience is the classroom supervising teacher" (p. 321). According to Hicks (1969), ". . . no other single individual has so direct an influence as the cooperating teacher in shaping the attitudes, skills and ideas of a prospective teacher" (p. 153). Copas (1984) supports this idea by stating, "The value of the direct learning experience in schools seems to depend upon the quality of the teacher with whom the student teacher is placed" (p. 49).

There also has been research on the impact of the student teaching experience on the attitudes and perceptions of the student teachers themselves. Cafee (1979) investigated the effects of the student teaching experience on 47 secondary student teachers' general attitudes toward students, teaching and pupil control. She found that general attitudes toward students and teaching became significantly more negative after student teaching. She also found that female student teachers held more positive general teacher attitudes, as well as more humanistic pupil control attitudes than did males. Cafee found that females' attitudes changed to a greater degree (more negative) as a result of their student teaching experience than the males. In contrast, Pascale & Treloar (1979) found that attitudes toward teaching and children became more positive during student teaching.

A number of studies have dealt specifically with the impact of the supervising teachers on the attitudes of their student teachers. Grimmet and Ratzlaff (1986) conducted a study in which they elicited from the student teachers and the faculty supervisors the specific expectations they held for the role of the supervising teacher. Funk and Musgrave (1973) evaluated the perceptions and attitudes of 573 student teachers toward their supervising teachers. Using an attitude scale toward the student teaching experience, Funk and Musgrave found a consensus that reflected a positive confirmation of the experience.

Yee (1968) investigated the effect of the supervising teachers' attitude toward students on the student teachers' attitudes. Using the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) Yee investigated 124 student teachers and their cooperating teachers ". . . to test the hypothesis that cooperating teachers' [attitudes] are a significant source of influence on student teacher [attitudes] and to determine the direction of causal influence" (p. 331). Yee found that the attitudes of student teachers toward young people generally reflected the predominant attitude of their cooperating teachers. Yee's review of the literature also revealed two major studies (McAulay, 1960 & Holeman, 1967) that supported the hypothesis that supervising teachers influence the attitudes of their student teachers. Although McAulay's sample was small (three first-grade cooperating teachers and six student teachers), he did conclude that "student teachers seem to be greatly influenced by their cooperating teacher. . ." (McAulay, cited in Yee, 1968, p. 327).

In contrast to the quantity of research on the student teaching experience, the effect of the supervising teachers' personal attributes and experiential backgrounds on the student teachers' perceptions and attitudes appears to be limited. Kelly (1965) identified and analyzed the criteria college supervisors, student teachers and elementary school principals considered important in the selection and recommendation of cooperating teachers. These criteria dealt more with philosophical/methodological approaches than demographic or biographical factors. Farbstein (1964) studied the requirements for cooperating teachers as perceived by student teachers in New Jersey. Two aspects of these criteria were commendable personal traits and commendable social traits. The study did not address specific biographical or experiental traits of supervising teachers.

Jacob's (1968) study of the relationship between student teachers' ages and their attitudes revealed no significant relationships. Jacobs also found no significant relationship between the student teachers' socioeconomic background and their attitudes toward their field experience. However, the research of Villeme and Hall (1980) indicated that prospective teacher attitudes toward education varied by gender, anticipated teaching grade and selected major within education.

Corrigan and Griswold (1963) reported that the degree of attitude change of student teachers depended upon the particular cooperating teacher. According to their research, some student teachers of certain supervisors showed more change than student teachers of other supervisors. In her review of the literature on the historical perspective of the relationship between the preservice teacher and the supervising teacher, Vogt (1988) stated, "Due to the overwhelming number of studies which support the impact of the cooperating teacher upon the

preservice teacher, it is difficult not to at least wonder about a causal relationship when looking at. . . attitudinal change data" (p. 15).

Statement of the Problem:

The purpose of this study was to ascertain if a relationship existed between the personal attributes and professional backgrounds of supervising teachers and the attitudes and perceptions of their student teachers toward their field experience. In an attempt to determine if there was a difference in attitude mean scores of student teachers who were supervised by supervising teachers of varying professional backgrounds (years teaching, level of education, grade level taught), data were generated with a 29-item Likert-type scale and a biographical information sheet,

This study was also an investigation into the possible relationship between specific personal factors (age and sex) of the supervising teacher and their student teachers' perception toward their field experience. The perceptions and attitudes were defined as a score on the Student Teacher Evaluation of the Cooperating Teacher Instrument developed by Funk & Musgrave (1974). For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that differences in mean scores could be interpreted as indicants of possible relationships.

Limitations and Delimitations:

It should be recognized that the instrument used for this study was of a high inference nature. According to Borg (1989), attitude scales are direct self-report measures and are subject to respondents' perception of norms and conditions; therefore, not always indicators of true attitudes and subsequent behaviors.

The background information of the supervising teachers was provided by their student teachers. It is assumed that this information (through 10 weeks of professional and personal interactions) is reasonably accurate. For the purpose of this study, the biographical and professional groupings of the supervising teachers (age, years teaching, grade level, etc.) were arbitrarily stratified by the researcher.

It should also be recognized that these student teachers (as a sample) represented preservice teachers from a midwestern state university of average size (12,300 pop.). Because the majority of the sample was female (supervising teachers = 71%, student teachers = 72%), consideration should be made before generalizing the results to all student teacher experiences. This sample was from a 10 week student teaching experience during the fall semester.

Hypotheses:

1. There is no relationship between the sex of the supervising teachers and the attitudes and perceptions of their student teachers toward the student teaching field experience.

2. There is no relationship between the age of the supervising teacher and the attitudes and perceptions of their student teachers toward the student teaching field experience. The groupings for age were arbitrarily stratified as: 22-30 years, 31-39 years, 40-49 years, 50-59 years and 60+ years.
3. There is no relationship between the experience of the supervising teacher and the attitudes and perceptions of their student teachers toward the student teaching experience. Experience was identified as number of years taught and stratified as: 2-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-16 years, 16-20 years, 21-26 and 27 + years.
4. There is no relationship between the professional background (identified as educational attainment - BA, MSE, MSE+) of the supervising teacher and the attitudes and perceptions of their student teachers.
5. There is no relationship between the grade level taught and the attitudes of the student teachers toward their field experience. Grade levels were stratifed as grades PreK-3, grades 4-8, grades 9-12.

Methodology:

The subjects for this study were 123 student teachers (elementary and secondary) who successfully completed the 1989 fall term of student teaching. The scores and information of an additional 19 student teachers were disregarded due to split assignments (requiring at least two supervising teachers).

During a required semester-end conference in December, these student teachers were administered an attitude questionnaire (see attached). In addition to the questionnaire, the students completed a biographic background data sheet reflecting the biographical/professional background information about their supervising teachers.

Instrumentation:

The instrument was a revised version of a 29 item five-point Likert-type scale (**Definitely Yes, Yes, To a Certain Degree, No, Definitely No**) developed and used by Funk and Musgrave (1973) to determine the attitudes and perceptions of 573 student teachers at Southwest Missouri State University during the spring and summer sessions of 1973. A factor analysis of the 29 items, using squared multiple correlations for communality, identified four factors which seemed to lend themselves to comparisons and further analyses. These four factors or groupings were: (a) Mentoring by the supervising teacher, (b) Structure provided by the supervising teacher, (c) Support provided by the supervising teacher, and (d) Teaching Responsibility encouraged by the supervising teacher.

The method of rational equivalence to determine internal consistency of the instrument was

the Cronbach's Alpha (Borg & Gall, 1989). This variation of the K-R 20 revealed an internal reliability of these four factors (groupings) as follows: Mentoring (r = .89), Suppport (r = .92), Structure (r = .95), Responsibility (r = .94). These factors (for the purpose of this study) were defined by the questions that addressed them. (See attached)

These factors are similar to the patterns that McConnell (1960) revealed in his five-year collection of student teacher responses addressing "How Supervising Teachers Helped Us" (as cited in Zerr, 1988). McConnell found six distinct categories: (1) personal influence of supervisors and their relations with students, (2) aid and encouragement with initial planning and teaching, (3) initiation into teaching, (4) help in assuming additional responsibility for class, (5) suggestions for improving plans, sources of materials, etc., and (6) guidance with child study, classroom management, professional growth (as cited in Zerr, 1988, p. 10).

The biographical/professional background form (developed for this study) provided information about the supervising teacher's age, sex and teaching experience. Additional material included grade level of instruction, specific discipline (if secondary) and level of educational background (BA, MSE, MSE +).

Findings of the Study:

The first hypothesis addressed the relationship between the supervising teachers' sex and the student teachers' attitudes. This information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of the Supervising Teachers' Sex and the Attitudes of Their Student Teachers as Measured Funk and Musgrave's Attitude Scale

Sex		Factors							
	N	Mentoring		Structure		Support		Responsibility	
		Ma	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Male	36	3.79	.93	3.61	.98	4.07	.96	4.0	1.18
Female	87	4.26	.64	3.78	.76	4.35	.47	4.38	.73

	Mentoring	Structure	Support	Responsibility
F Ratio	10.10	0.99	4.69	4.63
Significance	.002*	.35	.03*	.03*

note: aLower = negative perception

***p <.05**

As indicated in Table 1, there is a statistically significant difference in mean scores of the

student teachers as related to the sex of their supervising teachers. This relationship is apparent in the areas of Mentoring (Female M = 4.26 and Male M = 3.79), Support (Female M = 4.35 and Male M = 4.07), and Responsibility (Female M = 4.38 and Male M = 4.0).

The second hypothesis focused on the age of the supervising teacher as it related to the attitudes and perceptions of the student teacher. This information is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

A Comparison of the Supervising Teachers' Age and the Attitudes of Their Student Teachers as Measured by Funk and Musgrave's Student Teacher Attitude Scale

Age		Factors							
	N	Mentoring		Structure		Support		Responsibility	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
22 - 30	23	4.04	.80	3.56	.89	4.22	.86	3.99	.98
31 - 39	42	4.24	.66	3.98	.71	4.33	.47	4.37	.91
40 - 49	43	4.05	.85	3.62	.90	4.23	.75	4.26	.91
50 - 59	13	4.08	.76	3.57	.77	4.27	.51	4.26	.57
60 +	2	4.32	.45	3.72	.40	4.67	.23	4.17	.23

	Mentoring	Structure	Support	Responsibility
F Ratio	0.45	1.54	0.35	0.86
Significance	.78	.19	.85	.49

The results in Table 2 indicate that no statistically significant difference in mean scores existed when related to the age of the supervising teacher and the student teachers' attitudes and perception of their field experience.

The third hypothesis addressed the possible relationship between the supervising teachers' educational experience (years taught) and their student teachers' attitudes. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

A Comparison of the Supervising Teachers' Years Teaching Experience and the Attitudes of Their Student Teachers as Measured by Funk and Musgrave's Scale

Years Taught		Factors							
	N	Mentoring		Structure		Support		Responsibility	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2 - 5	15	4.24	.59	4.03	.60	4.37	.40	4.40	.46
6 - 10	23	4.0	.81	3.47	.93	4.20	.86	4.24	.86
11 - 15	37	4.21	.67	3.87	.67	4.31	.51	4.26	1.05
16 - 20	28	4.21	.84	3.67	.95	4.25	.82	4.30	.96
21 - 26	19	3.91	.89	3.64	.92	4.24	.57	4.16	.85
27 +	1	4.0	.00	3.44	.00	4.20	.00	4.00	.00

	Mentoring	Structure	Support	Responsibility
F Ratio	-4.96	-2.60	0.19	-4.04
Significance	1.00	1.00	0.94	1.00

Table 3 indicates no statistically significant difference in mean scores when relating the number of years taught by the supervising teacher and the attitudes of their student teachers toward their field experience.

The fourth Hypothesis addressed the relationship between the supervising teacher's level of educational attainment and the attitudes of their student teachers. This information is provided in Table 4.

Table 4

A Comparison of the Supervising Teachers' Educational Attainment Levels and Their Student Teachers' Attitudes as Measured by Funk and Musgrave's Scale

Educational Levels		Factors							
	N	Mentoring		Structure		Support		Responsibility	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
BA Degree	64	4.18	.80	3.80	.86	4.27	.74	4.31	.98
MSE Degree	36	4.13	.59	3.72	.75	4.39	.49	4.30	.70
MSE +	23	3.87	.85	3.50	.86	4.12	.62	4.01	.90

	Mentoring	Structure	Support	Responsibility
F Ratio	1.50	1.10	0.76	1.02
Significance	.24	.34	.48	.37

As indicated in Table 4, there is no statistically significant difference in mean scores when comparing the level of educational attainment of the supervising teachers and the attitudes of their student teachers toward their field experience. However, the mean scores for the MSE+ were lower in all four areas.

Hypothesis five considered the possible relationship between grade level taught and the student teachers' attitudes. The results are provided in table 5.

Table 5

A Comparison between Grade Level of Instruction and Student Teacher Attitudes as Measured by Funk and Musgrave's Student Teacher Attitude Scale

Grade Levels		Factors							
	N	Mentoring		Structure		Support		Responsibility	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Pre-K - 3	31	4.44	.62	3.87	.81	4.38	.47	4.44	.62
4 - 8	38	4.26	.60	3.73	.72	4.39	.46	4.26	.60
9 - 12	54	3.87	.85	3.65	.91	4.16	.82	3.87	.85

	Mentoring	Structure	Support	Responsibility
F Ratio	6.75	0.66	1.84	0.96
Significance	.002*	.53	.16	.40

*p <.05

As indicated in Table 5, in the area of Mentoring a statistically significant difference exists between mean scores of the student teachers and the grade level taught. The mean scores related to the other areas of Structure, Support and Responsiblity, although not significantly different, are lower for secondary (9-12) student teachers.

To identify the possible interaction of sex differences (as indicated in Table 1) influencing grade level mean scores, a Two-Way ANOVA was performed. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

A Comaprison of Grade Level of Instruction and Sex of Supervising and the Attitudes of Student Teachers

Grade Level	Male			Female		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
PreK-3	1	4.55	0.00	30	4.43	0.63
4 - 8	8	4.19	0.63	30	4.25	0.61
9-12	27	3.87	0.85	27	4.07	0.65

Table 6 indicates that although mean scores for male supervising teachers were lower (with the exception of the single male teacher at PreK-3 level) at all three grade levels, the pattern of difference in grade level was consistent regardless of the sexual make-up of the group.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The data obtained from this investigation resulted in the rejection of the first null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference in attitude scale mean scores between student teachers with male supervising teachers and those student teachers with female supervising teachers. This difference in mean scores suggests that student teachers perceived a more positive mentoring environment from female supervising teachers than did student teachers with male supervising teachers. The female supervising teachers also appeared to provide more support and encourage responsibility as perceived by their student teachers than their male counterparts.

The data from this study resulted in the acceptance of the second null hypothesis. There was no statistically significant difference of attitude scores of student teachers when related to the age of their supervising teachers. However, there was a pattern (although not statistically significant) that student teachers who worked with supervising teachers from the ages of 31-39 had a more positive perception of their experience.

The data from this study also resulted in the acceptance of the third null hypothesis. In the area of teaching experience, the data revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in attitude mean scores. However, the teachers with less experience (2-5 years) appeared to provide more mentoring, structure, support and responsibility (as indicated by the

mean scores of their student teachers) than their more experienced colleagues.

The fourth hypothesis was accepted. There was no statistically significant difference in mean scores of the student teachers when related to educational levels (BA, MSE, MSE+) of their supervising teachers. However, mean scores of student teachers whose supervising teachers had MSE+ degrees were lower in all four areas of Mentoring, Structure, Support and Responsibility.

The fifth null hypothesis was rejected. The data did reveal a statistically significant difference in mean scores when attitudes were related to the grade level of instruction. There appears to be a greater mentoring factor at the early grade levels (Pre-K-3 and 4 -8) than at the secondary grade levels of 9-12. This pattern was also evident (although not statistically significant) in the areas of Structure, Support and Responsibility. The 2-Way ANOVA (controlling for the interactional influence of sexual differences) indicated that the differences in grade level held true regardless of the sexual make-up of the supervising teachers.

Discussion:

The findings of this study support the research by McAulay (1960) and advanced by Yee (1969) that the supervising teachers may influence the attitudes of their student teachers. Although it is not the purpose of this study to establish causality between the attributes of supervising teachers and student teacher attitudes; this study does support (in principle) the contention of Villeme and Hall (1980) and Cafee (1979) that there is relationship between the sex of the supervising teacher and the attitude of the student teacher toward teaching.

There appears to be agreement with the findings of this study and Karmos and Jacko (1979) as well as Villeme and Hall (1979) that the parameters of teaching in an elementary classroom are different than those in a high school. Elementary student teachers (as indicated by their mean scores) appeared to perceived an environment much different from their secondary counterparts. This elementary environment was of a more nurturing, supportive nature than the secondary.

In reponse to calls for more research on supervising teacher's years of experience (Boschee, Prescot, & Hein, 1978), this study revealed that the newer teachers (with less experience) appeared to have a more positive effect on the atttitudes of their student teachers. Although this effect was not statistically significant, the pattern was consistent across all four areas of mentoring, structure, support and responsibility.

Recommendations:

This study (consistent with most of the literature on supervising teacher-student teacher relationships) indicates that a relationship between the student teachers' attitudes and the

supervising teachers' personal attributes is of practical significance (although not statistically significant in all aspects). Successful matches may depend on many variables including age and sex of the supervising teacher. As Boschee, Prescott & Hein (1979) suggested, It appears that more research should focus on the issue of student teaching/supervising teacher compatability.

It should be recognized that the majority of the supervising teachers in this study were female (87 female and 37 male). It should also be noted that most of the student teachers were female (88 female and 35 male). The interaction between like sexes could have influenced the perception of the student teachers. It is recommended that further studies identify the sex of the supervising teacher and their student teacher to determine of this interaction is statistically significant.

The differences in the elementary perception and secondary attitudes should also be investigated. This study supports the findings of Milgram & Milgram (1976), regarding differences in student teachers in primary, elementary and secondary levels. Are the paramenters of teaching and teacher attitudes between elementary and secondary so different? Are these differences developed and encouraged in the preparation of these teachers? Or are they a reflection of the characteristics of individuals who persue these different professional avenues. Additional research may provide insight into the way these differences are developed.

The relationship between the supervising/cooperating teacher and his/her student teacher is a vital link to the health of the student teacher's experience. Additional research to determine the effects of supervising teacher/student teacher compatability is essential to ensure that this experience is educational and rewarding for both the experienced educator and the future educator.

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